Name:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Media Bias Station Activity**

**Station 1 – Graph Analysis** – Use the two graphs on the board to answer these questions

1. Which news channel does the largest number of conservatives watch? Why do you think that is?
2. Which news channel does the largest number of liberals watch? Why do you think that is?
3. Which news channel does the largest number of moderates watch? What do you think that says about that channel?
4. Do you think the two channels know who their audience is, and if so, what could they do to appeal to them?

**Station 2 – Media Bias Reading** – Read AND annotate the article and then answer the questions below

Many Americans believe that the media have a liberal (democrat) or conservative (republican) bias. Nevertheless, most professional journalists strive to be fair and unbiased in their reporting. In its code of ethics, the Society of Professional Journalists calls on its members to be “honest, fair, and courageous.” It cautions that “deliberate distortion [of the facts] is never [allowed].”

What critics see as media bias may, in reality, be a reflection of how news organizations work. Most news media outlets are businesses. They need to attract readers, listeners, or viewers to survive. With limited space or time to fill, their reporters, editors, and producers have to make choices about what stories to cover. These decisions are less likely to be motivated by political ideology than by what they think will attract and hold an audience.

Journalists look at many factors in choosing what stories to cover. One is impact. Will the story touch people in some way, even if only to make them mad or sad? A second is conflict, preferably mixed with violence. Does the story involve a crime, a fight, a scandal, or a disaster? A third factor is novelty. Is the story about a “hot topic” or a breaking news event? A fourth is familiarity. Does the story involve people we all know and find interesting?

These factors influence what you see and hear as news. Because reporters like novelty, you won’t see many stories about ongoing issues or social problems. Because they want conflict, you won’t see much coverage of compromise in the making of public policy. And because they are looking for impact, bad news almost always wins out over good. As an old saying in journalism goes, “If it bleeds, it leads.”

1. According to the Society of Professional Journalists, how are its members supposed to report?
2. This article says that media outlets are businesses. How does that effect what they decide to cover?

**Station 2 – Continued**

1. Give three factors that determine whether a news outlet will cover a story or not.
2. What do you think the saying “if it bleeds, it leads” means? What evidence of this have you seen in your own life?

**Station 3 – “When Fox Attacks” video** – Answer the questions below based on the video

1. According to this video, name three ways that Fox News attacked Barack Obama during the 2008 presidential election.
2. Which issue do you think was the least important? Why do you think Fox chose to cover it?
3. Which issue do you think was the most damaging to Obama’s presidential campaign? Why?
4. What did Barack Obama do in response to Fox News coverage? Do you think he did the right thing? Why or why not?
5. Do you trust videos like this? Why or why not? Why do people make videos like this?